

1992. ABSTRACT. No. 174 in American Society of Mammalogists,
72nd Annual Meeting (June 14-18, 1992, Salt Lake City, Utah)

RABIES CONTROL IN NORTHWESTERN WYOMING

Craig A. Ramey, Larry D. Dickerson, and Marshal W. Robin, USDA/APHIS, Denver Wildlife Research Center, Bldg. 16, Denver Federal Center, P.O. Box 25266, Denver, CO 80225-0266, USDA/APHIS/ADC P.O. Box 864, Worland, WY 82225, and USDA/APHIS/ADC P.O. Box 133, Powell, WY 82435.

Although rabies among humans is rare in the United States, with fewer than one case per year during the 1980s, rabies among wild animals has become much more prevalent and now constitutes the most important reservoir of infection for both humans and domestic animals. Since 1976, skunks, raccoons, and bats have accounted for more than 85% of all reported cases of wild animal rabies, and skunks have become the primary vector for zoonosis in the Great Plains. According to the Center for Disease Control, the signs of rabies among wild carnivores cannot be interpreted reliably; therefore, immunofluorescence testing of brain tissue is suggested. The Animal Damage Control (ADC) program of USDA/APHIS initiated a rabies monitoring and control program near Powell, Wyoming. It was decided that depopulation of proven wildlife reservoirs would serve both goals. Between February and October 1991, suspected wildlife reservoirs were live-trapped. The primary reservoir was the Striped Skunk (Mephitis mephitis) with 22% (75) testing positive for rabies. All other carnivores including raccoons (0/188), feral cats (0/34), foxes (0/15), porcupines (0/6), coyotes (0/2), and dogs (0/2) were not infected with rabies. In addition, a public education campaign was conducted in conjunction with an extensive anti-rabies immunization program for dogs.